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A N N U A L      R E P O R T

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH - 1939



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Rebow Chambers,  
Sir Isaac's Walk,  
Colchester.

8th August, 1940.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen,

The Ministry of Health Circular 2067 dated 19th July, 1940, has directed that the Annual Report for 1939 should be confined to essential and urgent matters, and that statistics and other details usually incorporated in the report be carefully preserved for embodiment in a fuller report after the War.

This enables me to present a composite report for the three districts for which I am Medical Officer, with object of saving both expense and paper.

I have the honour to be,  
Your obedient Servant,

W. H. ALDERTON.



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As a result of the War the Public Health Departments spent a great deal of time over the casualty and fire fighting services.

In the three districts under review, Lexden and Winstree established and equipped a First Aid Post and a Mobile First Aid Post which is a converted motor coach in which casualties can be dealt with, at St. Albright's Hospital at Stanway. Three First Aid Party and Ambulance Depots were established, at Stanway, Dedham and Tiptree. First Aid Points were established in many of the villages.

Wivenhoe U. D. established in High Street a First Aid Point of considerably more importance than a village point, having regard to the congested nature of the district. A First Aid Party and Ambulance Depot were also established at the Old Boys' School.

West Mersea U. D. established an excellent First Aid Post, First Aid Party and Ambulance Depot at The Lawn, and also a First Aid Point at East Mersea. This gave a complete casualty service for the Island which is cut off from the mainland for a considerable time at certain tides.

Training of personnel for the staffing of these services had been in progress for twelve months prior to the outbreak of War, and a considerable efficiency was attained. The First Aid Posts were put in charge of Commandants who have kept up the efficiency of the posts and improved their organisation. Many practices and classes of instruction have been held in all three districts and these have maintained the interest of the personnel who now take considerable pride in their work.

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During July confirmation was received confirming the East Donyland Clearance Order 1 - 8, which provided for the demolition of 48 properties and involved the displacement of 109 persons. In view of the outbreak of War this business was postponed indefinitely.

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The Public Water Supplies in all three districts were analysed during the year and found to be of good organic and bacterial quality. This was particularly satisfactory in the case of East Donyland, whose supply had caused so much anxiety during the preceeding year; a close watch on the measures taken and frequent sampling has proved that the cause of trouble was found and overcome.





At the outbreak of War the three districts became reception areas, to which were evacuated unaccompanied children to the extent of 2,537.

They were apportioned as under:-

Lexden & Winstree R.D.	1900
Wivenhoe U.D.	222
West Mersea U.D.	415

Their condition on arrival left much to be desired. For the most part they had dirty heads, pediculi being present in a large number of cases. There were many cases of impetigo and some cases of scabies. In addition a proportion were unsuitable for billeting in private houses on account of enuresis.

Prompt measures were taken for dealing with these conditions in which the helpers who accompanied the school parties played a great part.

A number of small cleansing clinics were set up for cleansing heads and the treatment of sores. Constant inspections were made to prevent and discover re-infection of heads, so that eventually the standard of cleanliness, if not perfect was vastly superior to that on arrival.

For the difficult children and those with enuresis a small hostel was opened in West Mersea and in Lexden and Winstree, where considerable success was achieved by regular routine and supervision, so that children reported to be impossible in billets, became normal in the hostels.

Actual cases of minor illness and difficult skin conditions such as scabies were treated in two sick bays; one provided at Wakes Colne Rectory and one in West Mersea. Both these establishments served their purpose well, cases being dealt with from surrounding districts in addition to that in which they were situated.

It was anticipated that Diphtheria might become more prevalent in the districts as a result of the influx of children with the consequent crowding together of individuals in the houses. The three councils considered this matter and decided to begin a scheme of immunisation against diphtheria for the younger population. Preparations for this were complete by the end of the year.

In spite of the increase in the population of the districts notifiable infectious disease was prevalent on a smaller scale than in the previous year.





The figures were:-

Wivenhoe 10 cases (6 scarlet fever)  
West Mersea 9 cases (4 scarlet fever)  
Lexden & Winstree 62 cases against 92 in 1938  
(26 scarlet fever  
11 diphtheria  
18 pneumonia)

Minor infectious disease was also unaffected by the extra numbers of children most of the cases occurring before the arrival of the evacuees.

Generally it may be said that it was possible to ~~possible to~~ proceed with general public health matters almost unimpeded up to the end of the year. Housing and other inspections were up to normal in number, and it is interesting to note that food inspections were nearly 100 per cent of animals slaughtered.

